

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Individual

Rebecca Massey



Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

I am a Green Room Awarded actress living and working in Sydney, and have been working for over 30 years . I work across TV (Utopia), Film (The Black Balloon), and theatre (Cloudstreet, Holding the Man). In the last few years I have run an independent theatre company, Club House Productions, creating work for myself and other artists.

I was educated as a lawyer, but post University, chose the uncertain and greatly rewarding life in theatre. Or perhaps it chose me. Most of the people that I work with in the theatre were \,chosen\, than than chose - they just couldn't resist. And this really is the kicker for most of us artists - we just love it, and when we're younger with fewer small or elderly humans relying on us, when we can sleep on couches and don't mind that we have other jobs to pay our rent and food, it is possible, to work for free or for less than a junior receptionist . And so we do. But this isn't a great as a plan for a country like Australia to use as a flotation device for their cultural policy: it's unfair and unsustainable.

As a senior professional actress who works consistently across film, TV and theatre, and would be considered among my cohort as \,successful\,, I am unable to support myself financially from my work. There isn't enough, and it isn't paid well enough. As a baby actress, the wages were just alright - remembering that they don't go across the year - the work is sporadic and

Most of the work I do in the running of my company, I do without pay. I pay the artists I work with, but not myself. This is so the money I am successful in raising through funding (Create NSW and Creative Australia) goes further. There is less and less money, the presenters are more and more risk adverse. There just isn't enough money. Recently, I had 3 presenters wanting to program a new Australian work across the country – but I didn't have the funding to make the work that they wanted to buy. They didn't have the commissioning money. So no show – for my writer, actors and no show for the regional audiences.

In recent years, I have seen more and more excellent artists, leave the profession. Wonderful, bright talented professionals, some of whom have given their life to the theatre, are working in menial jobs – one 70 year old friend and genius actor, who in another country would be deemed a “national treasure” – is working as an accessibility worker in a school for children with disability. A job she could get without qualification.

Arts receive 1/10th of the funding sport receives.

I would like to ask you to consider that arts be funded in Australia at the same rate as sport. Or even 50% of the funding that sport receives would be UNREAL. The value that art adds to a society, is at least equal to sport. If you think back over your year, I'd bet that you will remember that what was fabulous about the last 3 months – was that concert (Nick Cave forever!), the musical you finally saw, the film that made you cry, the funny TV show you watched with your family (Colin from Accounts – yes!).

Gosh, it would be fair to pay those people properly so they can continue to offer Australia a context to understand and enjoy all our prosperity. And all the others that you don't even know of yet.

Thank you for calling for this submission. Thank you for taking the time to read it.

Sincerely

Rebecca Massey